DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 600 EA 030 015

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TITLE	Snapshots of Public Schools in the United States: Results from the Schools and Staffing Survey.
INSTITUTION	National Center for Education Statistics (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	NCES-1999-340
PUB DATE	1999-08-00
NOTE	25p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Ed Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398; Tel: 877-433-7827 (Toll Free).
PUB TYPE	Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Secondary Education; *Institutional Characteristics; *National Surveys; Principals; *Private Schools; Professional Development; *School Personnel; Student Problems; Teachers
IDENTIFIERS	Schools and Staffing Survey (NCES)

ABSTRACT

This booklet analyzes information obtained from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). The SASS is a set of integrated questionnaires that collect information about schools and the staff who work in them. The survey asks for information from a random sample of schools, their principals, a subset of the teachers in each school, and public-school districts. Public schools from every state were surveyed, including those administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. A representative sample of private schools was included in the survey. The survey addressed such issues as teachers' education, their experience in various capacities in schools, and their perceptions of school climate. The booklet also provides information about: students and the variety of professional and paraprofessional staff who serve them; professional development for teachers; instruction for limited-English-proficient students; perceptions of problems in schools, such as students who come to school unprepared to learn, who lack parental involvement, and who exhibit apathy, poverty, disrespect for teachers; influences on school policies, particularly in six areas of school policies and activities in which teachers and principals reported that they had a lot of influence; site-based decision-making; and average class size by state for the years 1993-94. (RJM)

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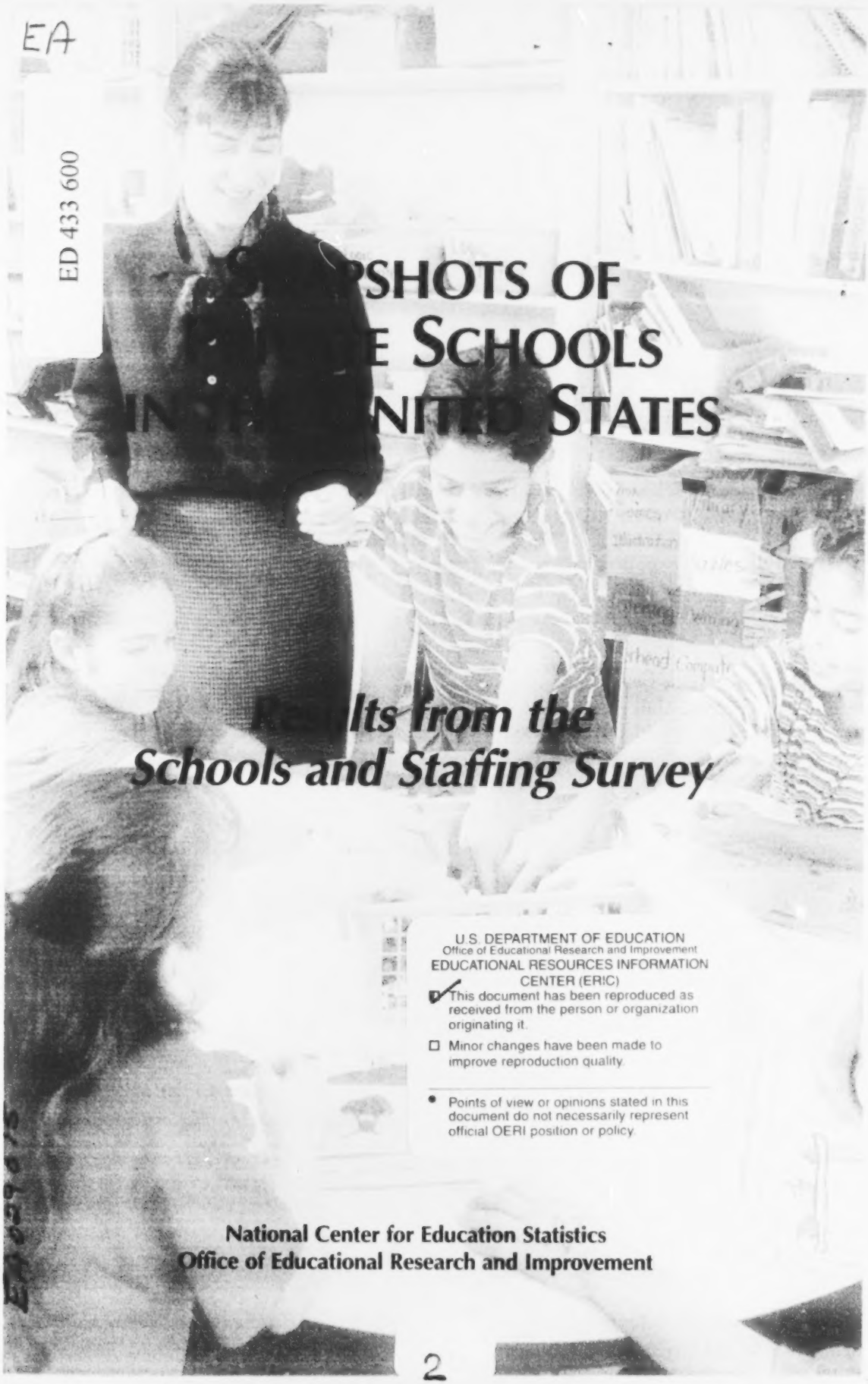

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Results from the Schools and Staffing Survey

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August 1999

Suggested Citation:
U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. *Snapshots of Private Schools in the United States: Results from the Schools and Staffing Survey.* NCES 1999–340, by Jin Kwon, Martha Naomi Alt, and Robin R. Henke. Kerry Gruber, project officer. Washington DC: 1999.

Design and layout by Leslie Retallick and C. Francesca Tussing, MPR Associates, Inc.

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Snapshots of Private Schools in the United States

Results from the Schools and Staffing Survey

INTRODUCTION

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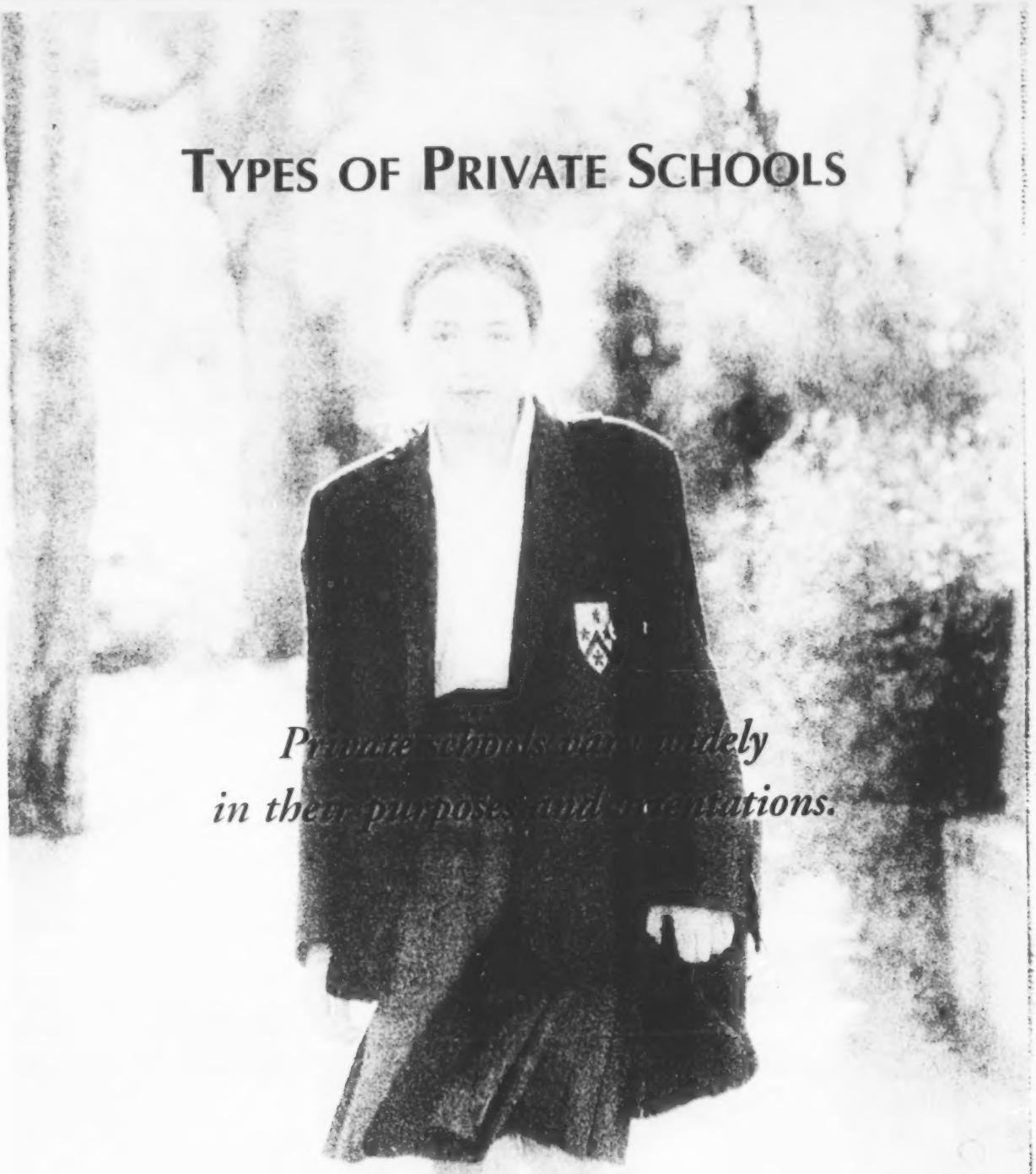
This booklet provides a few snapshots of private schools, using information obtained from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). We hope you will find it interesting and useful.

The SASS is a set of integrated questionnaires that collect information about schools and the staff who work in them. In order to assemble a complete picture of K–12 schooling in the U.S., the survey asks for information from a random sample of schools, their principals, and a subset of their teachers. Public schools' districts are also surveyed. The sample represents the diversity of private and public schools across the nation.

The SASS provides information about many topics. The Private School Questionnaire includes questions on such subjects as the students whom the schools serve, programs offered, and various school policies—for example, high school graduation requirements. The Principal Questionnaire provides data on principals' experience in various capacities in schools, perceptions of problems in their schools, and goals for their students. The Teacher Questionnaire explores such issues as teachers' workload, their education and experience, and their perceptions of their working conditions and school climate. The information in this booklet provides only a small sample of the data available from the SASS—the last page tells you how to obtain free publications that present more information from the survey.

SASS data are used by many people who are interested in K–12 education, including teacher professional organizations, private school associations, and journalists. Education data are most useful when they describe contemporary conditions in schools. However, the SASS was last administered in 1993–94. As the student population grows in size and diversity and as the country debates how to improve schools, the need for current data is urgent. Your participation in the survey contributes to the efforts of many people toward improving schools for America's students.

TYPES OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS



Private schools differ widely in their purposes and orientations.

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Types of Private Schools

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has developed several ways of categorizing private schools to study the diversity among them. One typology consists of three major categories of private schools.

Major Category	Description
Catholic	Affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church
Other religious	Religiously oriented, non-Catholic
Nonsectarian	Schools with no religious orientation or affiliation

SASS data indicate that close to one-half of private schools had a religious orientation other than Catholic, about one-third were Catholic, and one-fifth were nonsectarian in 1993–94.

Percentage distribution of private schools by category: 1993–94

SOURCE: Schools and Staffing Survey: 1993–94 (Private School Questionnaire).

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PRIVATE SCHOOLS,

BY LEVEL

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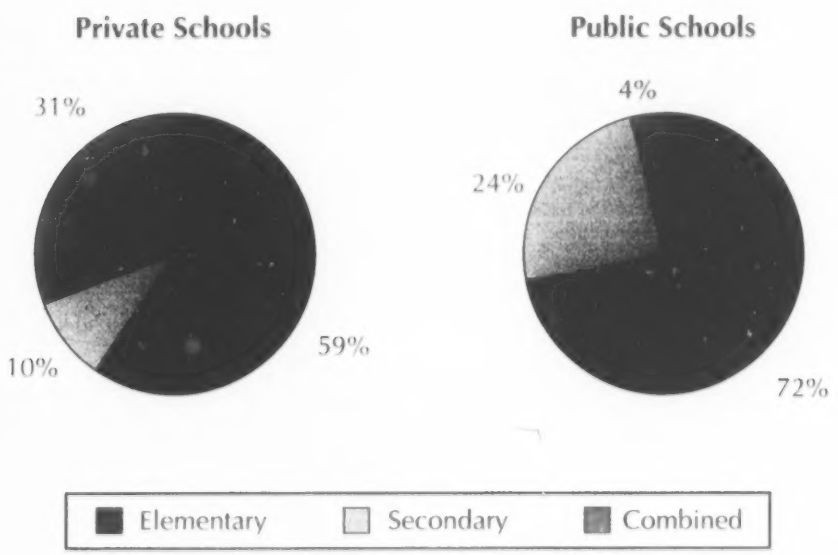
Private Schools, by Level

In 1993–94, there were 26,093 private schools and 80,740 public schools in the U.S.

- The majority of both private and public schools were elementary schools (schools with grade 6 or lower).
- Ten percent of private schools and about one-quarter of public schools were secondary schools (schools with grade 7 or higher).
- About 30 percent of private schools and 4 percent of public schools were combined schools (schools that include both elementary and secondary grades).

Percentage distribution of private and public schools by school level: 1993–94



SOURCE: Schools and Staffing Survey: 1993–94 (Private and Public School Questionnaires).

School Size

Many believe that school size is an important factor in learning.

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School Size

Private schools tend to be smaller than public schools.

- In 1993–94, one-quarter of private schools had fewer than 50 students, compared with only 3 percent of public schools. At the other end of the size spectrum, only one-fifth of private schools had 300 or more students, compared with about 70 percent of public schools.

- Among private schools, 36 percent of Catholic schools had 300 or more students, compared with about 12 percent of other private schools.

Percentage distribution of schools by enrollment size, sector, and type: 1993–94

	Fewer than 50	50–99	100–149	150–299	300 or more
Total private	24.3	17.2	12.7	26.1	19.6
Total public	3.0	3.8	4.9	17.3	71.0
Private school type					
Catholic	0.5	6.5	11.8	45.7	35.5
Other religious	32.7	22.9	14.2	18.3	11.9
Nonsectarian	41.7	20.7	11.0	13.9	12.7

SOURCE: Schools and Staffing Survey: 1993–94 (Private and Public School Questionnaires).

PERCEPTIONS OF PROBLEMS

IN SCHOOLS

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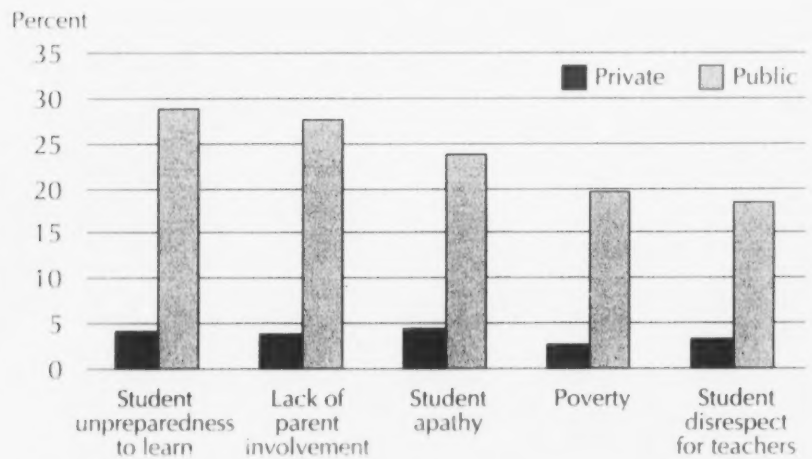
Perceptions of Problems in Schools

In the 1993–94 SASS, private and public school teachers and principals rated the seriousness of various problems in their schools.

- Less than 5 percent of private school teachers reported that any of five problems were serious (students' unpreparedness, lack of parent involvement, student apathy, poverty, and student disrespect for teachers), compared with 19 to 29 percent of public school teachers.

- In both sectors, teachers were generally more likely than principals to rate problems in their schools as serious (data not shown below).

Percentage of private and public school teachers who perceived certain issues as serious problems in their schools: 1993–94



SOURCE: Schools and Staffing Survey: 1993–94 (Private and Public School Teacher Questionnaires).

Principals' Influence on School Policies

Principals' leadership is one key to school effectiveness.

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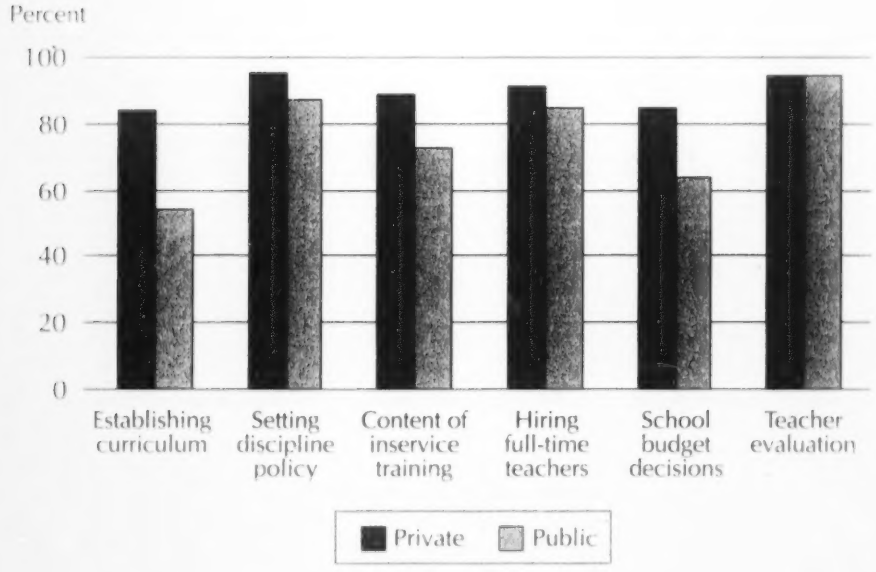
Principals' Influence on School Policies

While politicians and school reform advocates debate who should control what in public schools, private school staff report high levels of control and influence in their schools.

- Private school principals were more likely than public school principals to report that they had a lot of influence in several areas of school policy, including establishing curriculum and making school budget decisions.

- Private and public school principals reported similar levels of influence in evaluating teachers.

Percentage of private and public school principals who reported that they had a lot of influence on decisions about various school policies: 1993–94



SOURCE: Schools and Staffing Survey: 1993–94 (Private and Public School Principal Questionnaires).

INFLUENCE ON

ESTABLISHING CURRICULUM

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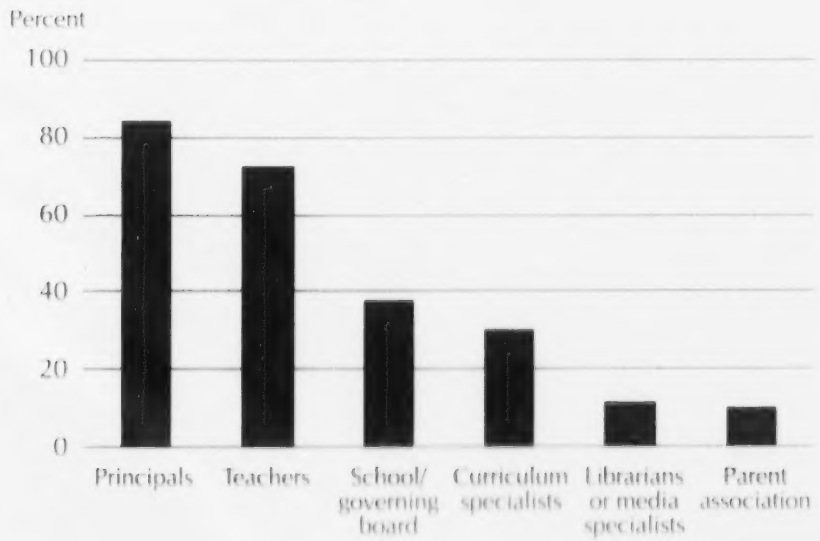
Influence on Establishing Curriculum

In addition to rating their own influence, principals also rated the influence of other groups or individuals in their schools or communities on decisions about policy areas, including establishing curriculum.

- Most private school principals (84 percent) thought that they had a lot of influence on establishing curriculum. Also, 72 percent of principals said that teachers had a lot of influence in this area (data not shown below).

- No more than 40 percent of private school principals thought that the school or governing board, curriculum specialists, librarians or media specialists, or parent association had a lot of influence on establishing curriculum in their schools.

Percentage of private school principals who thought that various groups or persons had a lot of influence on establishing curriculum: 1993–94



SOURCE: Schools and Staffing Survey: 1993–94 (Private School Principal Questionnaire).

High School Graduation Requirements

On average, private high school graduation requirements meet standards recommended by education reform advocates in the 1980s.

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High School Graduation Requirements

In the 1993–94 SASS, schools were asked about high school graduation requirements in various subjects.

- Compared with public secondary schools, private secondary schools required students to complete slightly more years of instruction in core academic subjects in order to graduate from high school.

- In particular, private secondary schools required more years of foreign language, on average, for high school graduation (1.2 years) than did public secondary schools (0.3 years).

Average years of instruction in various subjects required for high school graduation, by sector: 1993–94

	Private	Public
English	4.0	3.9
Mathematics	2.9	2.5
Computer science	0.6	0.3
Social sciences	3.2	3.0
Physical sciences	2.5	2.2
Foreign language	1.2	0.3

SOURCE: Schools and Staffing Survey: 1993–94 (Private School and Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaires).

College

Application Rates

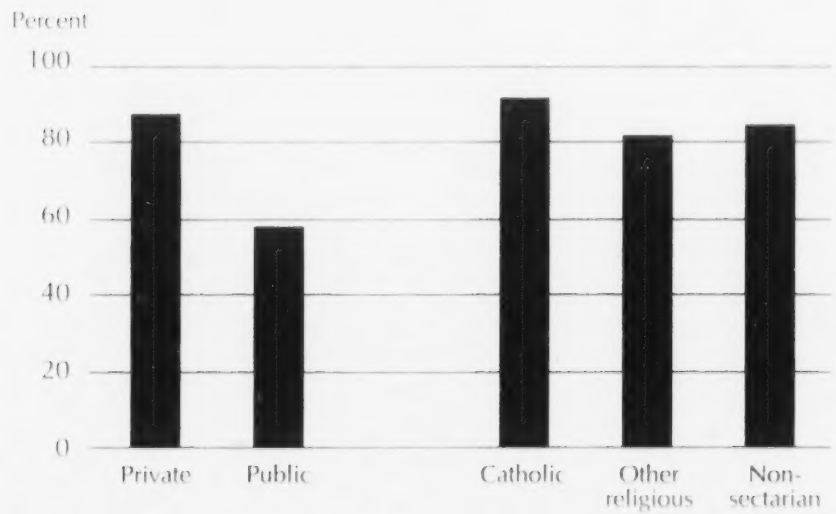
College Application Rates

In the 1993–94 SASS, schools that offered 12th grade were asked how many graduating 12th-graders applied to two-year and four-year colleges.

- Proportionally more private than public school graduates applied to college (87 percent compared to 57 percent).

- About 90 percent of 12th-graders in Catholic schools applied to college. In other religious schools 82 percent applied, and in nonsectarian schools about 85 percent applied.

Average percentage of 12th-grade students who applied to college, by sector and affiliation: 1993–94



SOURCE: Schools and Staffing Survey: 1993–94 (Private School and Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaires).

For more information . . .

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If you have specific questions about the SASS questionnaire, e-mail sassdata@ed.gov or call (800) 221-1204.

The SASS website (http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass.html) provides a complete list of publications that report findings from the SASS. Through the website you can order free paper copies of those publications, or browse or download electronic versions of the most recent documents.

In addition to ordering from the website, you can order free copies of these publications by calling Ed Pubs toll free at (877) 433-7827.

Selected titles that might be of interest include the following:

- *America's Teachers: Profile of a Profession, 1993–94* (NCES 97460)
- *Characteristics of Stayers, Movers, and Leavers: Results from the Teacher Followup Survey: 1994–95* (NCES 97450)
- *Job Satisfaction Among America's Teachers: Effects of Workplace Conditions, Background Characteristics, and Teacher Compensation* (NCES 97471)
- ***Private Schools in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1993–94*** (NCES 97459)
- *Public and Private School Principals in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1987–88 to 1993–94* (NCES 97455)
- *Schools and Staffing in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1993–94* (NCES 96124)
- *Toward Better Teaching: Professional Development in 1993–94* (NCES 98230)

NCES 1999–340